Clatsop County Historical Society Quarterly

CUMTUX

Vol. 41, No. 1 — Winter 2021

Image courtesy of Martha's son, Jay Naggiar

Martha Lovell Dahl with her late husband Bill Dahl. ca. 2015

We are sad to report the passing of Martha Lovell Dahl back in October 2020. For twenty years she was a consistent face and presence, serving as the Business Manager of the Clatsop County Historical Society. Through changes in board members and executive directors, construction, new offices, expansions and growth, Martha was a familiar voice of institutional and community history. Capable and organized, she was praised by auditors for her ability to quickly locate and produce anything required.

For twenty years, Martha was the one who answered your telephone calls and letters, scheduled and trained both staff and volunteers, and greeted you when you came into the museums to visit us. She seemed to know everyone in Astoria and their family history (and where they bought their cars!). Martha was proud of the role the Lovell family played in Astoria's history. She is missed by all of us connected with CCHS.

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CUMTUX

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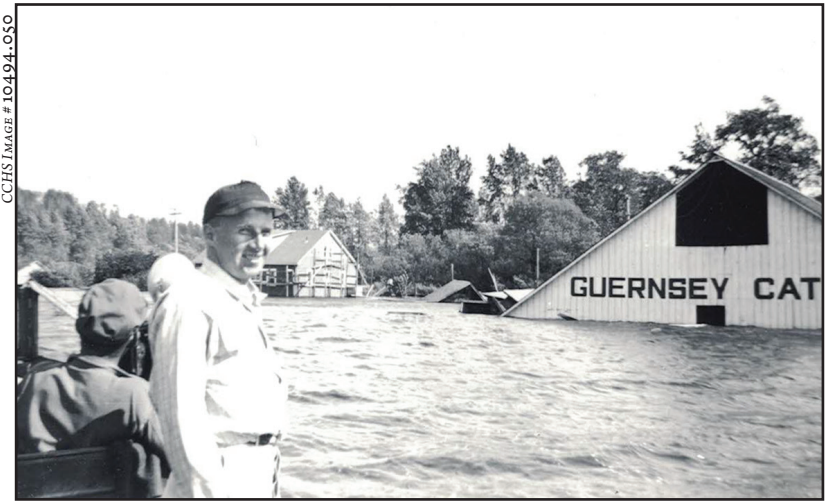
The ferryboat *Almar*. ca. 1960
Image courtesy of Jim Aalberg

CUMTUX: Chinook jargon:
"To know…to inform"

CCHS Image # 10494.050



Puget Island under water during the Columbia River flood, June 1943.

In This Issue . . .

Jim Aalberg's research skills were applied to unraveling the Westport to Cathlamet river ferries' complicated history, the main story in this issue.

Jim also forwarded a story by Ron Shiozaki, a former resident of Westport, about the largest Japanese community in Clatsop County. Ron's mention of a relative and one of the most notable residents of the area, Newton Westley (originally "Uyesugi"), led to a story about the first licensed Japanese-American optometrist in Oregon.

B y chance, a cousin of my cousin, a former Brownsmead resident, Dr. Hannu Laukkanen, is an Associate Graduate Faculty Member and Professor Emeritus of Optometry at Pacific University. I asked him if he knew of Dr. Newton Westley. He did and forwarded a story by Mike Francis for the Fall 2020 issue of *Pacific*, the magazine of Pacific University, which we are pleased to have permission to reprint here. Dr. Hannu Laukkanen is also a well-known Columbia River snag diver whose story was printed in the Fall 2003 issue of *Cumtux*.

Samuel Nick Soter grew up in a Greek community in Clifton. He wrote about his memories of the area in the Winter 2004 issue of *Cumtux*. This time, we are printing his story about the history of the north-eastern part of Clatsop County, "Bend in the River."

The western part of the county is represented by a story written by Melvin L. Bashore, "Fort Stevens' Firebug."

—The Editor

Catching the Last Ferry
The Cathlamet-Puget Island-Westport Connection

by Jim Aalberg

Long before the first commercial ferry pushed off into the Columbia River, a connection between Cathlamet, Washington, and Westport, Oregon, was forged in the early 1850s by two pioneering Scotsmen: John West and James Birnie.

John West arrived at the spot on the Columbia River that would be named for him "Westport" in 1850. He built and operated a sawmill and salmon cannery, which would help establish his still-thriving town.

Even earlier, James Birnie, a retired Hudson Bay Company man, had settled in Cathlamet in 1846, where he operated a small trading post that purchased its inventory directly from his former employer. He referred to the area as "Bernie's Retreat," which would eventually include an Oregon Territorial Post Office established on August 8, 1851, with Birnie appointed the first Postmaster.

West had to travel by boat to Cathlamet for supplies and mail before the Westport post office was established on September 23, 1863, when West was appointed as Postmaster.

In 1878, West purchased from Birnie's widow, Charlotte, the land that comprised the Bernie's original Cathlamet Donation Land Claim. The West family played a significant role in the growth and development of Cathlamet in the late 1800s and early 1900s. In the 1930s and 1940s, the Westport Lumber Company mill supplied the electrical power for Cathlamet via a sub-marine electrical power cable laid on the floor of the Columbia River.

More than 170 years later, the connection between Cathlamet, Puget Island, and Westport survives via the longest continuously operating ferry on the Columbia River and is the only ferry currently crossing the Columbia River between Oregon and Washington.

Early Ferry Service on the Lower Columbia

In 1920, Captain Fritz Elfving formed the Astoria-McGowan Ferry Company starting with a scow (barge) pushed by a tug that could carry nine cars. On May 1, 1921, Elfving put the fifteen-car ferry *Tourist*, powered by two forty-five horsepower Fairbanks Diesel en-

Image courtesy of Jim Aalberg

The ferryboat *Tourist No 1.*, built in 1921 in Astoria, lies intentionally grounded on the beach west of the ferry dock on Puget Island, Washington. The ferry was owned and operated by Elmer Danielson and ran from Puget Island, Washington, to Westport, Oregon, commencing in 1936. ca. 1955

gines, on the Astoria, Oregon run to Megler, Washington. The name was later changed to *Tourist No. 1* when in 1924, Elfving replaced her with a larger ferry named *Tourist No. 2,* which could accommodate twenty automobiles. The *Tourist No. 1* then was moved to supply service at Coos Bay, Oregon. Later the *Tourist No. 1* returned to the lower Columbia. In 1931, Elfving replaced *Tourist No. 2* with *Tourist No. 3,* which accommodated twenty-eight automobiles.

Cathlamet, Washington–Westport, Oregon Ferry Connection:

To address the need for ferry services upriver, on May 30, 1920, the *Oregon Daily Journal* reported: "Fredrick Houchen had nearly completed arrangements to run a ferry for automobiles between Cathlamet and the Oregon side of the Columbia. The Oregon terminal point would be between Wauna and Westport at a place called Hansen's Landing."*

This undertaking by Houchen never materialized. However, Fredrick and Arthur W. Houchen operated, for some time, a scow and tug ferry service to and from Puget Island as early as 1924. Arthur W. Houchen, eight years later, would again play a significant role in the ferry service.

1925–1932 The Coates Family-Initiated Commercial Ferry Service:

Even though Houchen's early attempt proved unsuccessful, the need for upriver ferry services persisted. According to documents filed in Clatsop County, the Cathlamet

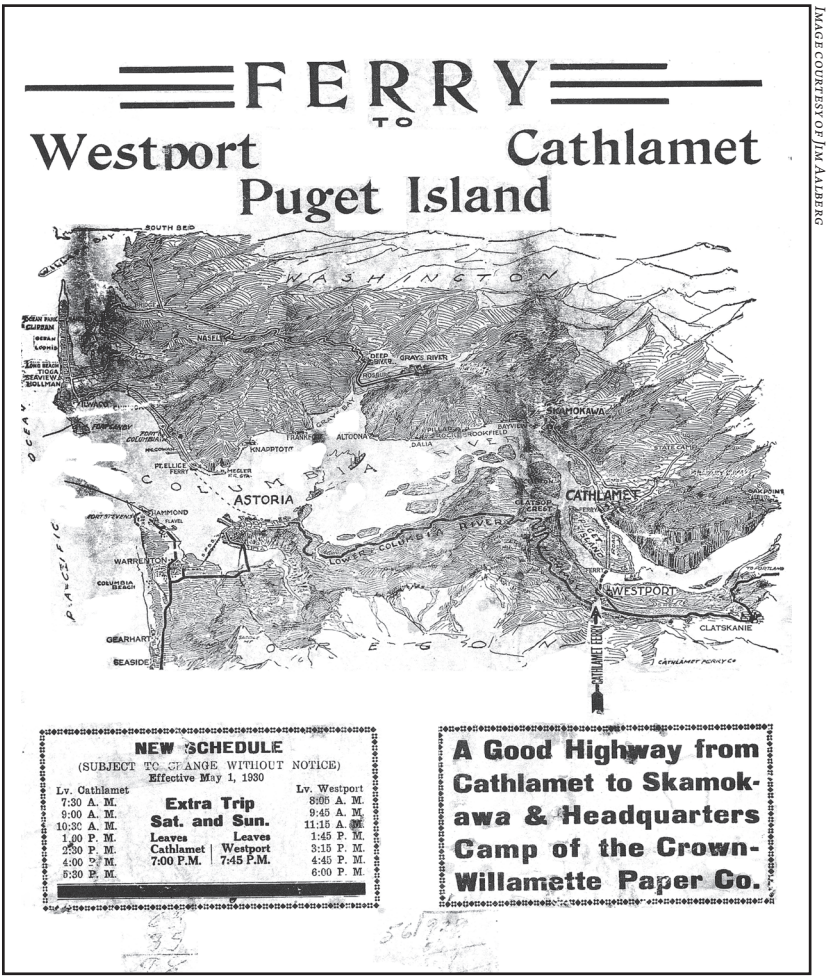


IMAGE COURTESY OF JIM AALBERG

A 1930 SCHEDULE POSTER OF THE CATHLAMET FERRY CO., OWNED BY WALTER G. COATES.

Ferry Company was incorporated on December 15, 1924. Starting with a capital stock of $25,000, Westport was stated as the principal place of business. Listed as incorporators were W. G. (Walter George) Coates, E. N. (Walter's son Ellis Nelson) Coates, and L. R. (Walter's wife Lillie Rose) Coates.

Prior to the time of this incorporation, Walter Coates already operated a ferry service between Puget Island and Cathlamet. Before that, he ran a ferry out of Kingston on Puget Sound, Washington. His granddaughter Ora Loraine Bauer still resides on Puget Island.

In 1925, Coates put two identical eight-car wooden ferries into oper-

ation, each with sixty-five horsepower inboard Fairbanks Morse Diesel engines. These twin ferries, the *Cathlamet* and the *Westport,* were built at the Mathews Boatyard in Portland.

In May of that same year, Clatsop County put out bids for the construction of the ferry landing at Westport, and the landing was completed in late June. So beginning on June 25, 1925, the *Cathlamet* ran for four months from the Washington side around Puget Island's eastern tip and across the main shipping channel to Westport. A month later, the *Cathlamet's* twin the *Westport,* came online for the Puget Island to Westport run. By July of 1925, a three-and-a-half-mile gravel road was constructed transecting the twelve-mile-long Puget Island from north to south. This road would later become Washington State Route 409. The fare was $1.25 for automobiles and 15¢ for foot passengers.

Coates operated a Buick touring car to transport foot passengers and his ferry crew over the Puget Island road between ferry terminals. The Buick was later replaced by a van-like vehicle with curtains on the side to roll down in bad weather. A maroon-colored Studebaker bus, purchased from a Portland hotel, was later used.

Before this, further upriver, the Long-Bell Lumber Company had commenced ferry service crossing between Longview, Washington, and Rainier, Oregon, in August of 1922. The ferry service ceased when the Longview-Rainer Bridge—at the cost of $6,000,000—was completed on March 29, 1930. In 1930 the Ocean Beach Highway (State Route 4) was constructed from Cathlamet east to Longview.

For seven years, Coates piloted the ferries along with his sons, Mel and Ellis, all being certified river pilots. In 1932, Coates decided to sell his ferry business based on two concerns. (1) The business may be lost to Captain Elfving's ferry when Washington State Route 4 was extended downriver to the west, which would allow autos to take the Megler-Astoria ferry to the Oregon side. And, (2) the Longview Bridge continued to lower its toll.

Seeing the writing on the wall, Coates sold his ferries. The *Cathlamet* was purchased by the Umpqua Navigation Company and moved to Reedsport, Oregon. The *Westport* went to Waldport, Oregon. These ferries then serviced passengers crossing the pre-bridged bays along US Highway 101. The ferry runs were then "given" to Arthur W. Houchen, who had failed to develop a ferry system in the area eight years earlier with his brother Fredrick.

In April of 1932, after Walter Coates had sold his two ferry boats to the Umpqua River Navigation Company, he considered creating a ferry service to both sides of the river with a single ferry. Landings

would be on the downriver, southwestern tip of Puget Island, and the other at Bradwood, Oregon, instead of Westport, Oregon. This service was never initiated.

After the *Westport* and the *Cathlamet* ferryboats ended their runs in 1932—and until the *Wahkiakum* ferryboat came online in 1968—there may have been as many as six different ferryboats operating these runs for varying periods. Written resources and interviews of old-timers give conflicting dates. *The Oregonian* ran a story on July 15, 1964, stating, "there were eight different ferryboats before the *Wahkiakum*." Most likely, these would have been: *Cathlamet*, *Westport*, *Everyday No. 1*, *Everyday No. 2*, *Everett A*, *Pioneer*, *Tourist No. 1*, and *Almar*.

A Bridge Over the Cathlamet Channel to Puget Island:

The citizens of Wahkiakum County, Washington, in November of 1930 voted to approve $100,000 in general obligation bonds to assist in the building a bridge across the Cathlamet Channel to Puget Island. At the time, it was thought that the bridge could be completed for no more than $225,000. However, the County's financial situation would not allow it to obligate itself for more than $100,000. In 1935, the state of Washington stepped in to assist and appropriated $150,000 to aid in construction costs. By that time, construction costs were estimated at $350,000 to $400,000. Then, in 1937 the federal government came to the rescue with a $225,000 federal public works grant. By then, the cost had reached over $500,000, and after further financial gyrations, the funds were secured. The bridge named for Julia Butler Hansen was completed and opened on August 26, 1939.

Ultimately the bridge eliminated the more challenging nature and cost of getting on and off a ferry for the residents of Puget Island, giving them easy access east and west on Washington State Route 4. However, a ferry across the southern shipping channel of the Columbia was still necessary to land in Westport.

1932–1936 Arthur W. Houchen Takes Over:

In April of 1932, before the bridge to Puget Island was built, Arthur W. Houchen and Ray Lendten took over the Cathlamet Ferry Company, assuming Coate's licenses, permits, and docks. Houchen operated the Cathlamet to Puget Island run with a barge and the tug, *Cora*, powered by a thirty-five horsepower Palmer engine. Lendten operated the run between Puget Island and Westport using a barge and the tug *Standard*, powered by a thirty horsepower Sterling engine (which

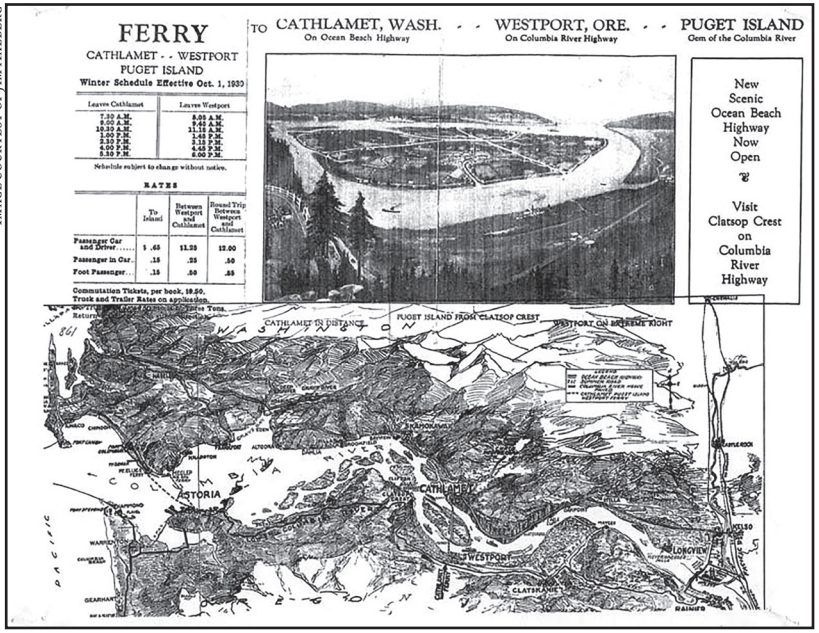


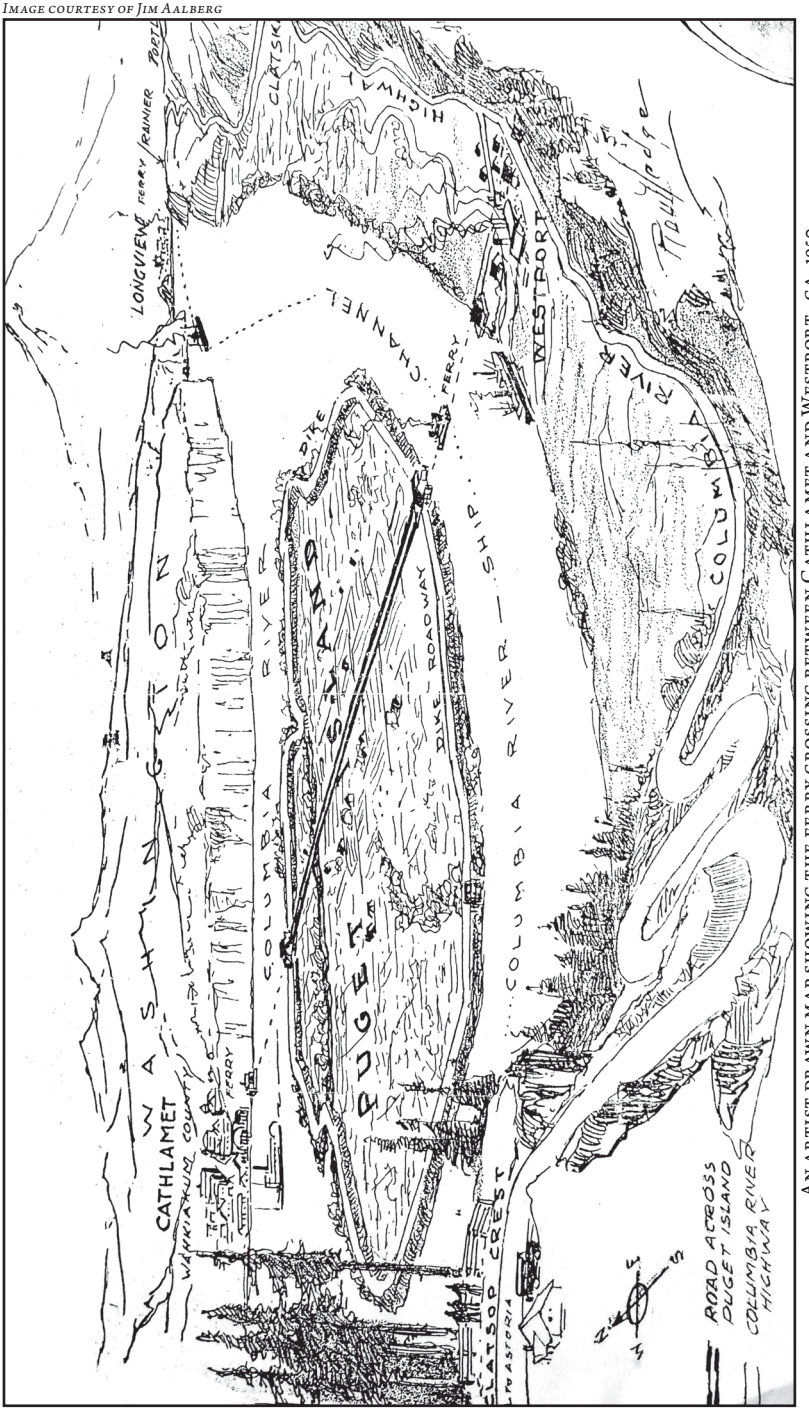
Image courtesy of Jim Aalberg

The Cathlamet Ferry Co.'s poster exhibiting winter schedule in effect beginning October 1, 1930. $2.00 for passenger cars and driver for round trip between Westport and Cathlamet. 50¢ for each additional passenger.

he later replaced with an eight-cylinder Stutz engine). Houchen then put the ferryboat *Everett A* on the Cathlamet to Puget Island run, and the tug *Cora* and a barge operated on the Puget Island to Westport run. In 1934 Houchen purchased the ferryboat *Everyday* from John Johnson and brought it down from Maryhill, Washington, deploying it on the Cathlamet to Puget Island run. (The *Everyday* began its service in 1924 at Maryhill and was partly owned by Samuel Hill, owner of the Great Northern Railroad, and used to bring guests to his estate at Maryhill.) Houchen performed a major remodel of the ferry, including the replacement of the original 100 horsepower Sterling engine with an eight-cylinder Stutz.

Houchen built a new ferry named the *Everyday No.2* for the Puget Island to Westport run on which he installed a four-cylinder Sampson engine. Houchen replaced the *Everyday* with the *Everett A* on the Cathlamet to Puget Island run. The *Everyday No. 1* was beached near Cathlamet, and the *Everyday No. 2* was sold to interests at Shoalwater Bay, Washington. In 1936, Houchen (it is unclear as to Lendten's continued involvement after circa 1933) sold the business to Elmer Danielsen.

Image courtesy of Jim Aalberg



An artist drawn map showing the ferry crossing between Cathlamet and Westport. ca. 1950

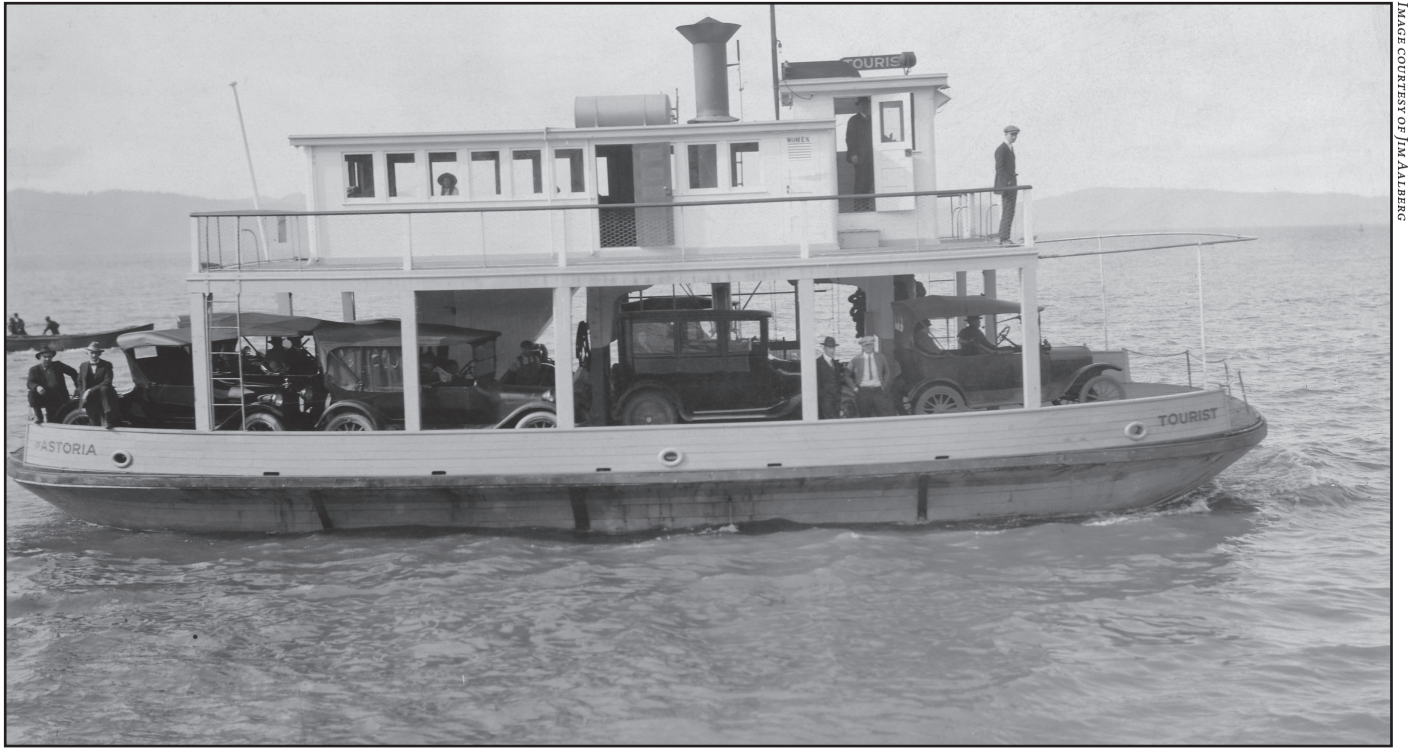


Image courtesy of Jim Aalberg

The ferry boat *Tourist* was originally owned and operated by Captain Fritz Elfving, shown here on its Astoria-Megler run. She could carry fifteen cars and was powered by two forty-five horsepower Fairbanks diesel engines. In 1936, this ferry was bought by Elmer Danielsen and renamed the *Tourist No. 1* and put to ply between Puget Island and Westport.

Image courtesy of Jim Aalberg

The *Westport* (right) ran from Puget Island to Westport. The *Cathlamet* (left) ran from Cathlamet to Puget Island. Identical in construction, both ferries were powered with 65 horsepower Fairbanks-Morse engines and could carry eight cars. Passengers, crew (pilot, engineer, and two deckhands), and vehicles would debark on Puget Island and make the 3.5-mile road trip across the island to the other ferry. A Buick touring car was provided and later a bus for foot passengers and crew. The fare was $1.25 for vehicles and 15¢ for foot passengers. ca 1930s

Image courtesy of Jim Aalberg

The *Almar* outbound from Westport. Notice the Sheppard & Morse Lumber Company in the background. ca. 1950

Image courtesy of Jim Aalberg

The eight-car diesel ferry *Westport* put in service on the Puget Island, Washington, to Westport, Oregon, run and owned by Walter G. Coates. The man at the rail in the captain's uniform is Melvin Coates, chief pilot and Walter's son. Note the hearse parked at the stern. Many individuals from Cathlamet and Puget Island were buried at the Westport Cemetery. The ferry would make special runs to accommodate funeral processions. ca. 1925

Image courtesy of Jim Aalberg

The newly constructed fourteen-car ferryboat *Almar* was put in service in 1948 by Elmer Danielsen. Almar is the Norwegian spelling for Elmer. ca. 1948

1936–1958
The Danielsens':

It was difficult to determine the exact timing of the different ferries operated by both Houchen and Danielsen. Which runs the various ferries served was equally challenging to ascertain as there are several conflicting storylines. Evidently, a ferry by the name of *Pioneer* was operated by Houchen or Danielsen or both for a short period on one of the runs. Indications are that it was beached and left to the elements near the main shipping channel ferry dock on Puget Island in the late 1930s or early '40s. Both Houchen and Danielsen operated the *Everett A* on the Cathlamet to Puget Island, which Danielsen sold, or may have beached. It was removed from service after the Cathlamet to Puget Island bridge was completed in 1939. Danielsen also operated the *Everyday* (unclear if No. 1 or No. 2) on the Puget Island to Westport run.

Danielsen and his wife Jessie purchased the ferryboat *Tourist*, (now named *Tourist No. 1*) in 1936 to replace the *Everett A*. The *Tourist* was built in Astoria at the cost of $17,000 in 1921. It had a wooden hull, with dimensions of 60′ × 27.6′ × 5.5′ and was powered by a ninety horsepower gas engine. *Tourist* was initially owned by Captain F. S. Elfving and operated on the Astoria to Megler run. Elfving had sold the ferry in 1936, and it was working in Coos Bay, Oregon, when the Danielsens' brought it back to the Lower Columbia for the Cathlamet to Puget Island crossing. When the Cathlamet to Puget Island bridge opened in 1939, Danielsen may have sold the *Everett A,* or it may have been beached on Puget Island. The *Tourist No. 1* remained on the Puget Island to Westport run until the *Almar* replaced it in the late 1940s.

Wahkiakum County commissioners requested (or rather insisted) that Danielsen improve the north ferry landing. However, he refused, which reinforced their decision to build the Julie Butler Hansen Bridge one-quarter mile downstream from the existing Danielsen ferry landing between Cathlamet and Puget Island. (additional information on the bridge see page 6). When the Cathlamet to Puget Island bridge opened in 1939, Danielsen may have sold the Everett A, or it may have been beached on Puget Island. The *Tourist No. 1* remained on the Puget Island to Westport run until the Almar replaced it in the late 1940s.

The ferry service between Puget Island, Washington, and Westport, Oregon, continued as usual with *Tourist No. 1* taking over for the *Everyday* in the early 1940s.

Danielsen had, for some time, wanted to sell his ferry operation at Westport. He was aware that his *Tourist No. 1*, which had re-

Image courtesy of Jim Aalberg

The ferry *Wahkiakum*, the Dant & Russell-Westport Division sawmill in the background located west of Plympton Creek in Westport, Oregon. ca. late 1960s

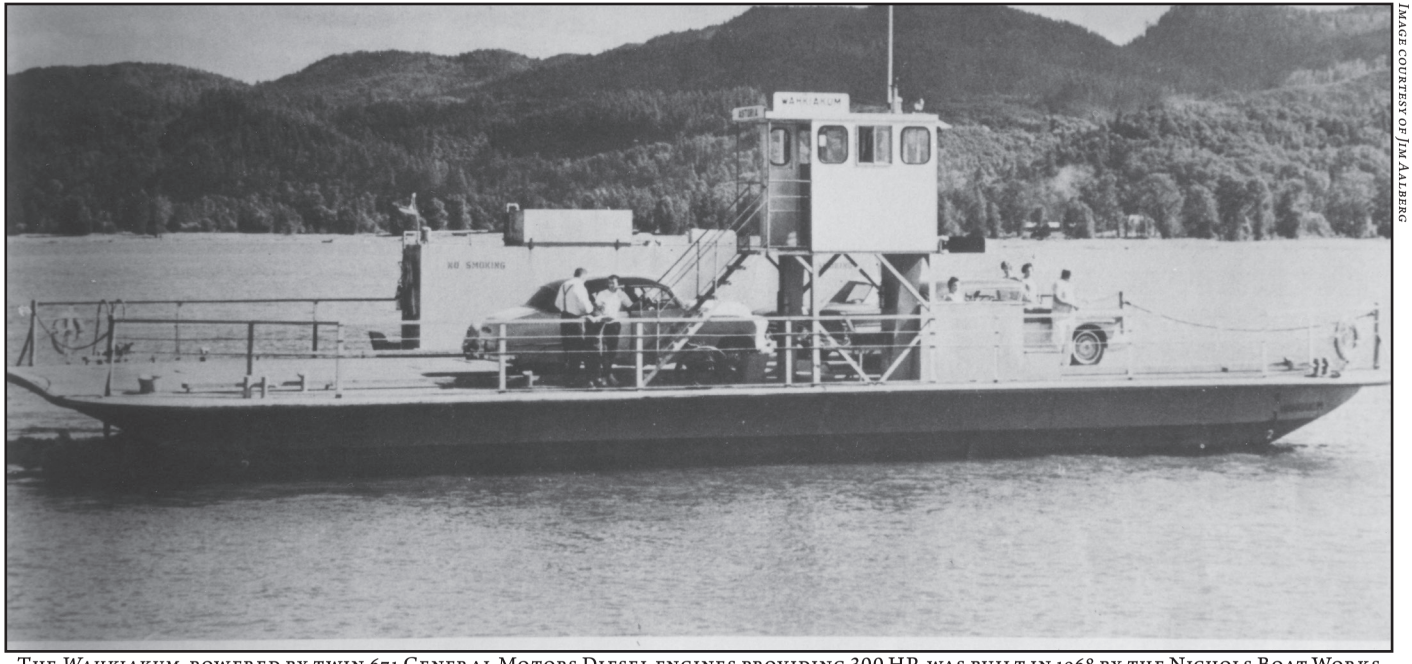


Image courtesy of Jim Aalberg

The *Wahkiakum*, powered by twin 671 General Motors Diesel engines providing 300 HP, was built in 1968 by the Nichols Boat Works of Hood River, Oregon. The twenty-nine by seventy-five-foot craft (thirty-six-feet with deck overhang), which could carry up to a dozen cars, was equipped for the 1½ -mile ferry route from the Oregon shore to Puget Island. She was commissioned by Wahkiakum County, Wash. at a cost of $46,000.00. She carried sophisticated navigational equipment. ca. 1968

Image courtesy of Jim Aalberg

Ferry boat *Wahkiakum* approaching Westport, Oregon. Background is the Dant & Russel-Westport Division lumber mill. ca. 1970

placed the *Everyday*, was nearing the end of her useful life in the late 1940s. Danielsen also realized that the Rainier-Longview Bridge was going to lower its tolls, thus threatening his service. Danielsen was offered $35,000 for his operation, but his wife and partner Jessie would not sign the papers.

So, with Jessie refusing to sell in 1949, the Danielsens' commissioned a new ferry, the *Almar*, at the cost of $43,700. "Almar" is the Norwegian spelling for the Germanic name "Elmer", which roughly translates to "famous for their noble character." At sixty-five feet long, this all-metal ferry equipped with two, 671 General Motors engines was capable of carrying fourteen cars and truly lived up to her name, becoming an excellent resource for Elmer and Jessie's business. She was built one hundred feet from the ferry landing on Puget Island, and remnants of the shipway can still be seen today. The *Almar* also carried life preservers stenciled with the word "Astoria" to recognize the city where she was registered.

The *Almar* could not have been completed too soon. A year before it was commissioned, Danielsen beached the *Tourist No. 1* about one hundred feet downriver from the Puget Island ferry landing. He left his old ferry to the elements. He drenched her in diesel fuel several times in an attempt to expedite the ferry's demise. However, her water-soaked hull proved slow to burn. Sixteen years later, in 1965, one could still see the carcass of the old ferry. Puget Island became known as the "Ferryboat Graveyard" with the *Tourist No. 1*, the *Everyday No. 1*, and possibly the *Pioneer*, all ending up beached in the same area near the ferry landing.

Oregon Revenue Men Demand their Pound of Flesh:

In 1952, Oregon tax officials thought the state was owed back taxes from the Puget Island Ferry Company based on the value of the ferryboats, regardless that all of the Danielsens' ferries, including the new *Almar*. Even though the vessels were domiciled at Puget Island in the State of Washington, earlier documents show that the ferries were registered in Astoria, making the issue of taxation murky at best. The State of Oregon claimed $2,451.77 in back taxes in 1956, even though Danielsen did pay Clatsop County taxes of $1,216.44 in 1955. If Oregon were to require such a tax on his ferryboats, Danielsen indicated that the business would no longer be profitable and would have to shut down. On March 5, 1957, Danielsen was served a subpoena by two Oregon Tax Commission agents while making a crossing from Westport to Puget Island. After the *Almar* cleared the mouth of the Westport Slough, the agents

Image courtesy of Jim Aalberg

The *Wahkiakum* approaching the ferry landing at Westport, Oregon, displaying a banner, "Wahkiakum, Thanks You." This thank you was attributed to the placing of a commemorative sign at the landing welcoming passengers to Oregon. This all came about due to the long term ferry pilot Danny Eaton, who served over three decades on the *Wahkiakum* (the majority as chief pilot), commented to passengers upon arriving at the Westport ferry landing, "Welcome to Oregon, but they are too darn cheap to put up a sign." The Westport grade school students took up the challenge in 1986 and raised funds for a commemorative marker to be placed at the landing. Victor Atiyeh, the then governor of Oregon, helicoptered into the Westport grade school playground to preside over the dedication of the marker. ca. 1986

Image courtesy of Jim Aalberg

The *Wahkiakum* retuning to its Puget Island home after repairs and general maintenance at the Astoria Boat Builders facilities located on Young Bay. ca. 1980s

approached Danielsen and made demands for unpaid taxes going back as far as 1945. He was so angered that, upon arrival at its Puget Island landing, he tied the *Almar* to the dock, refusing to return to Westport. The taxmen had to hitchhike back to their car by way of Longview and Rainier. The ferry was tied up for eight days. Danielsen never paid the Oregon taxes, and the Oregon state legislature ultimately passed a bill exempting interstate ferries landing in Oregon from Oregon state taxation.

The Smallest County in the State of Washington Gets into the Ferry Business:

In 1958, after twenty-two years in operation, the Danielsens' sold the ferry. However, the buyer went broke and defaulted on the purchase. Elmer Danielsen immediately found himself back in the ferry business. Then Elmer and Jessie divorced in April of 1959, and she was awarded the ferry in the settlement while Elmer retained the ownership of the Puget Island telephone company. Patronage for the ferry service had declined after the closures of the two big sawmills—the Wauna Lumber Company mill and the Sheppard & Morse Lumber Company in Westport. The ferry still carried some 14,000 autos, 900 trucks, and 19,000 passengers as of 1958. Jessie indicated at the time that the volume of business was not sufficient to support the employment of two deckhands. She ran the ferry for a couple of months after the divorce, but her efforts to find a buyer to continue the service were not successful.

Jessie discontinued ferry service on November 17, 1959, and for the next four-and-a-half months, there was no service. She moved to Seattle after selling the *Almar* to George Bacon of Maryhill, Washington. The ferry was then taken to Puget Sound for service between Anacortes and Guemes Island. The *Almar* was eventually taken to Alaska and converted into a fish-receiving boat.

With this shutdown, many thought that it might be better to move the then proposed lower Columbia interstate bridge (the current Astoria-Megler Bridge) upstream. Either of the less costly sites at Jim Crow Point (near Brookfield, Washington) or a Puget Island crossings to Bradley Point, Oregon was proposed. The elevation at Bradley Point would indeed allow for the necessary clearance for passing ships.

After approximately five months without ferry service, operations and service resumed on April 21, 1960. Darrel Boylan of Richland Tug and Barge Company stepped in and provided ferry service utilizing the tug, *Sylvia B.*, and the 75 × 24-foot barge, *Pendleton*, which could accommodate twelve automobiles.

On October 1, 1960, Boylan could no longer make a go of it, and he discontinued service. However, at the request of the County of Wahkiakum, he did extend operation for two more weeks. The County then took over, leasing Boylan's equipment and employing Oscar Bergseng, who had piloted for Danielsen's ferry operation going back to 1944. As the pilot, Bergseng and his son George operated the leased tug and barge on the run between Puget Island and Westport for over two years until May of 1962 when the new ferry, *Wahkiakum* was placed on the run by the County.

Since 1960, Wahkiakum County has been subsidizing the money-losing ferry operation. However, in 1965, as the 100 million dollar Crown-Zellerbach paper mill was under construction and fares were bound to pick up, there were discussions of adding another ferry to the run. Some thoughts included the possibility of a three-point service from Puget Island to Westport to Wauna and even more talk of constructing a bridge. Still, these discussions turned out to be just that: discussions. Back then and even more so now, fares never covered operating costs.

In 1969, the State of Washington considered the ferry a general extension of State Route 409. The state taxpayers covered the vast majority of the cost—sixty percent of operations—with the remaining amount co-covered by Wahkiakum County taxpayers and, of course, fare collections.

In 1986, the Crown Zellerbach paper mill workers at Wauna and thirty-eight other commuters petitioned Wahkiakum County to have the ferry schedule adjusted by fifteen minutes to better match up with the shift changes at the mill. At the time, some twenty-five to thirty Crown Zellerbach workers lived on Puget Island. Some of the mill workers added that this would allow them time to stop at a tavern and down a few beers before boarding the ferry. The commissioners agreed the schedule could be changed.

When the *Wahkiakum* began service (as is the case today with the *Oscar B),* this ferry operation was the only interstate ferry operating west of the Mississippi River. Moreover, it is one of only three ferries currently crossing the Columbia River. The other two are intrastate Washington ferries both upriver from Grand Coulee Dam: the Keller Ferry, which connects to SR21, and the Inchelium-Gifford Ferry, operated by the Colville Confederated Tribes connecting SR25.

The *Wahkiakum*, which is a Chinook word meaning "tall timber," was a steel ferry built by the Nichols Boat Works of Hood River, Oregon, at the cost of $46,000 (approximately $400,000 in 2020 dollars). Navigation equipment

Image courtesy of Jim Aalberg

The ferry boat *Wahkiakum* passing River Ranch in Westport, Oregon, on its 1½ mile
Nichols Boat Works in Hood River, at cost of $46,000 to Wahkiakum
The vessel was powered by twin 671 diesel eng

run between its Puget Island and Westport terminuses. She was built in 1968 by the County taxpayers. The 75 X 29-foot ferry could carry twelve cars.
ines that generated 300 horsepower. ca. 1980s

consisted of a compass and a radio. She was powered by twin 671 General Motors diesel engines providing 300 horsepower. The *Wahkiakum* could accommodate twelve automobiles and up to thirty-six passengers on its 75 × 29-foot deck. The *Wahkiakum*'s maiden voyage was on Memorial Day, May 30, 1962. The Wahkiakum County Public Works Department operated the ferry 365 days a year, making at least eighteen runs a day. Captain Oscar Bergseng was hired as a pilot with his wife Adine, serving as the deckhand.

The Bergseng Family:

Oscar Bergseng, who was born of Norwegian descent in 1902, was Jessie Danielsen's brother and an experienced ferry-hand. He started working on the Puget Island to Westport ferry service beginning in 1936 on a part-time basis while also working full time at the Westport Lumber Co. mill. In 1948 he left his mill job and became a full-time ferry-skipper for Danielsen. Wahkiakum County later retained him to operate the leased tug and barge equipment owned by Boylan. Oscar's wife Adine served as the deckhand for many years. Oscar piloted the ferry until 1964 and remained manager until he finally retired in 1985. His son Gary who had received his river pilot's license from the U. S. Coast Guard (at the unprecedented young age of eighteen) in 1966, took over as ferry pilot in that year. Gary had learned to run the ferry as a young boy standing on a box behind the wheel. Oscar's other son George also piloted the ferry, and another son Albert served as a deckhand. In the mid-1960s, the fare was $1.25 for autos, $1.50 for small trucks, and $3.00 for large trucks.

Of all those who have been connected with the ferry system over the years, Oscar Bergseng's name is the most prominent. He started working for Danielsen in 1944 and then for Boylan when Wahkiakum County took over operations. He worked twenty-six years on the ferry, seven of those years part-time. At one point, four full-time employees were Bergseng's: Oscar, his wife Adine, and sons George, Gary, and Albert. When Oscar retired in 1966, Gary took over as skipper. Dan Eaton and Lamar Blix were also longtime deckhands before becoming captains in their own right—Blix for some years. Eaton also served on the *Wahkiakum* for over three decades, the majority of the time as chief pilot.

Current Ferry the *Oscar B*:

The aging *Wahkiakum* had been in service for over fifty years by 2015 and was replaced in March of that year with a brand-new ferry, the *Oscar B*, named in honor of the longtime ferry skipper, Oscar

Image courtesy of Jim Aalberg

February 27, 2015. The arrival of the newly constructed *Oscar B.*

Bergseng. As early as 2006, the Wahkiakum County Commission started discussions about the need to construct a new replacement ferry. Then, as can be expected of governmental management, the ferry was over-built, over-engineered for the job, and over budget. It had the same "birthing" place as its predecessor, the *Wahkiakum*, at the Nichols Brother Boat Builders of Freeland, Washington, and cost a staggering $5,700,000. It measures 115 feet in length with a forty-seven-foot beam and takes a draft of four feet. It can accommodate twenty-three automobiles and one hundred passengers. It can also handle the large pulp trucks critical to the Georgia-Pacific paper mill at Wauna. The ferry docks at Westport and on Puget Island had to be rebuilt to accommodate the new *Oscar B,* at the cost of $2,500,000 and $575,000 respectfully. Initially, the new ferry experienced multiple breakdowns and challenges, and even today, the ADA restrooms are, for some reason, closed to the public.

The *Oscar B* is owned and operated by Wahkiakum County. Fares contribute marginally to its operating costs, of which eighty percent is covered by the taxpayers of the State of Washington and twenty percent by the taxpayers of Wahkiakum County. In 2019, the *Oscar B* carried 83,151 total passengers, including 44,941 vehicles, 994 "large vehicles" over twenty-two feet in length, 1,161 motorcycles, 436 bicycles, and 503 pedestrians. Significant volume to be sure, which peaks in the summer months based on the strength of the tourist season. Current fares are $6.00 a car and $2.00 for foot-passengers. In 1930, the round-trip vehicle fare between Cathlamet and Westport was $2.00, round-trip fare in 1946 was $1.75, and then back up to $2.00 in 1961.

The *Oscar B* has the lowest fare of any ferry operating in the state of Washington. The state's current annual operating contribution is $1,190,000 (the state, in effect, has a cap on their contribution based on their approved biannual budget). Wahkiakum County makes up the difference of approximately $100,000 plus. Currently, the *Oscar B* is making eighteen runs a day and operates 365 days a year.

Interruptions, Challenges, and Other Anecdotes:

The ferry typically runs seven days a week. However, during severe freezing conditions, as was the case in 1929, the ferries were idled for roughly six weeks awaiting ice-free water. Again in 1955, the ferry could not run for four days due to ice in the river. In February, service between Puget Island and Westport stopped carrying vehicles, but not passengers, for seven weeks. This interruption in service was because the Westport ferry slip had

Ferryboats	Approximate Yrs. of Operation	Owner	Run (PI=Puget Island)
Cathlamet	1925-1932	Coates	Cathlamet-PI
Westport	1925-1932	Coates	PI-Westport
Everett A	1932-1939	Houchen/ Danielsen	Cathlamet-PI & PI-Wesport
Everyday	1934-1936	Houchen/ Danielsen	Cathlamet-PI
Everyday No. 2	ca. 1933	Houchen/ Danielsen	PI-Westport
Pioneer	ca. 1935-1940s	unclear	unclear
Tourist No. 1	*1936-1949*	Danielsen	PI-Westport
Almar	1949-1959	Danielsen	PI-Westport
Wahkiakum	1962-2015	County	PI-Westport
Oscar B	2015-current	County	PI-Westport

to be partially rebuilt after collapsing under the weight of a heavily laden logging truck. Repairs to the slip were made with wolmanized timbers from the Wauna Lumber Company. During that time, passengers were still ferried.

Ply on:

What began as a necessity with John West's first boat rides across the river to get his mail and supplies in the 1850s continues today. The route of the *Oscar B* serves the 800 plus residents of Puget Island, the mill workers, and the pleasure-seekers. For those who live on the island, the ferry is still the most direct route across the shipping channel of the mighty Columbia to access groceries, hospitals and doctors' offices, and other basic necessities. Until this need is met another way, even if it is unprofitable, the ferry will continue to ply on.

History of the Japanese in Westport, Oregon

by Ron Shiozaki, a former resident of Westport
March 2006

Lillian Holten has asked me to write a brief history of Japanese who lived in Westport. Since I have only a few pictures and no printed information regarding this, I will have to resort to my memory, which, seemingly, has been declining with age. So the accuracy as to time and names may not be absolutely accurate. [Some of the names appear to be misspelled and have not been verified.]

My father, Shikazo Shiozaki, was one of the early Japanese pioneers. He was born in 1878 and came to America in the early 1900s. He worked in the Alaska and Seattle areas before coming to Westport, Oregon. I would guess that would be around 1905. He was one of the earliest Japanese workers. As the number of Japanese working for the Westport Sawmill Co. grew, he was made foreman of the Japanese. Somewhat around that time, he went to Japan and married my mother, Suyeko Uyesugi.

The Japanese workers came to this country as single men searching for a better life and higher pay. Some of the single men later went to Japan and got married or sent for picture brides. Even at the peak of married workers, there were only around fourteen married couples; the rest were single men. In the 1920s, there were perhaps sixty to eighty single workers, who lived in bunk style buildings, housing three to four men. My father ran a large mess hall that served four meals a day. The fourth meal was at 10:00 PM when the swing shift would work from 6:00 PM to 3:00 AM. This was six days a week. Sunday was the only day that three meals were served.

It was a tight-knit community. They would only venture into town to shop at the company store or go to the Four L Hall to shoot pool, bowl, for snacks at the restaurant, and few even played poker there. In camp, they had their own small library. Occasionally, a Japanese film company would come and show Japanese movies.

The number of children who attended grammar school and high school was minimal since many families had moved away after the Depression began to set in after 1929. And, most of the children were considerably younger than me. My oldest brother, Mas, was the

most senior in the Japanese camp. In 1932, when he graduated from Westport High School, there were only four Japanese in high school; Sachiko and Chiyoko Nakamura, my brother Mas, and myself. In grammar school, Mary Yamaguchi and possibly one other attended. My younger brothers and my father had decided to live in Japan after visiting his mother there. So the rest of our family grew up in Japan.

When I graduated from Westport High School, Chiyoko Nakamura and I were the only Japanese there. In Westport Grammar School, I don't believe that there were more than three to four Japanese. During the depression years, the sawmill was operating only one shift a day. Consequently, many of the workers had moved to other areas. Besides the sawmill workers, six other Japanese worked for the Westport Laundry, operated by Jun Kanda and his wife. Also, a family that worked at the Westport Hotel and boarding house owned and operated by the Taylor family. This couple lived in a section one mile west of Westport called Taylorville, which was developed by the Taylors.

There were twenty-five to thirty Japanese working at Nakata Slough for Mr. M. Nakata of Seattle, who operated the Oregon-Washington Timber Co. This was located between Westport and Wauna which was on the Columbia River. The operation was loading whole logs on to Japanese vessels that transported them to Japan. In addition to the Japanese at Nakata Slough, there were probably thirty to forty Japanese working at the Wauna sawmill. There were likely no more than three families; the rest were single men.

After graduating high school, I moved from Westport to work for the Great Northern Railway as a flagman for four months before entering the University of Washington. So I don't have much information about Westport after that since I rarely returned to Westport. As to when the sawmill closed and the last of the Japanese left, I do not have any accurate information.

The following are some of the names of those that lived in the Japanese Camp that I can recall. I hardly remember most of the single men's names.

Kojiro Uyesugi (brother of my mother), his wife Chiyo, sons Newton and Eddie, and daughters Corrine and Alice. Newton's name was changed to Newton Wesley. As an optometrist he later became president of North Pacific College of Optometry in Portland and president of Monroe College of Optometry in Chicago. He changed his name to Wesley since students had difficulty pronouncing UYESUGI. He had been credited by California Opthalmology Association for fathering and foster-

ing contact lens as we know it today. In 1960 he started the National Eye Research Foundation and American Vision, a school to teach techniques of contact lenses to doctors and optometrists.

Shikazo Shiozaki Family -- Wife Suyeko Shiozaki Sons – Masaru, Ted Mioru, Esam Ronald, Harry Yutaka, Jack Itomi and Jim Takashi and daughter – Ruth Utako.

Seikichi Uyesugi – (my uncle) Wife Manga, No children

Tsumura Uyesugi – (Also my uncle) Wife Kazuko, Sons – Fred, Tom & Dick

Nakamura Family – Mother & father I do not know, daughters – Sachiko and Chiyoko, & son – George

Mr. & Mrs Kambe – no children

Mr & Mrs Tsujimura Family – Had children, don't remember number. One son was Jim.

1920 Census for Westport

Kanda Hazime
Ishihara Sakuhei
Tarakichi Araki
Shiosaki Shiogo
---- Suye
---- Masaru
Osaki Yoshimatou
Matsumager Nakamata
Katayama Shigiru
Nara Yoshitaro
Igo Shiungo
Kitakata Yorihiro
Nagesana Taizo
Yamauchi Tsutomu
Kawahara Sumuma
Suzuki Kotaro
Sumata Tsuchigoro
Hirao Manabu
Furukawa Seitoro
Hattori Seiichi
Obata Koichi
Harada Kamego
Hattori Manzo
Yoshida Kinjo
Tsunemitsu Imagi
Kanbe Morito
Sumida Otokichi
Yamasaki Rinnosuke
Takei Notoro
Obayashi Kisaburo
Nagai Toshijoshi
Haruta Fulentaro
Myoraku Kimata
Yomaguchi Ugitsuto
Iwaakuni Bligokichi?
Tsukada Yosamatsu
Hama Sanzi
Hama Itaro
Okubo Seichi
Takeda Jagoro
Minami Munemori
Mari Mankichi
Takenaba Shingo
Ooka Kumakichi
Obata Sakutaro
Tsumuro Takeji
Obata Huni
Tani Matsuechi
Minsami Morikichi
Morikawa Tamaziro
---- Yoshino
Katayama Tojiro
---- Toshi
Yamamoto Kyoichi
---- Yoshi
---- Fumyko
Tomari Kasakichi
---- Yoto
---- Toyonobu
Takei Kunihiro
---- Cluijo
Yamato ?oga
---- Sachiko
---- Sumyko
Nakamura Masutaro
---- Koma
---- Sachiko
---- Chiyoko
Uyesugi Kojiro
---- Chigo
---- Newton
---- Corrine

Yamamoto Family – Mr & Mrs and son Akira, daughters Toshiko & Yasuko

Yamaguchi Family – daughter Mary.

Some of the single men (most of them I don't know their first names) Iwakuni, Kitaka, Minami, Joe Mori & 2 brothers, Obata, Tanaka, Uchibori, Yoshida

There were many others but I simply cannot recall their names.

There was also one Korean man. Can't recall his name but he was very tall for an [Asian]—stood 6′ 2″ or more.

CCHS Image 15.150.072 Aalberg Coll.

Takuaro Mori outside his residence in "Jap Camp." He was born in 1903 in the prefecture of Shiga-ken, Japan, near Osaka. He immigrated with a broker to America in 1920 and they both worked at the Westport mill. Takuaro was married and worked as a scaler and grader and was a skilled carpenter. He was sent to the internment camp at Minidoka, Idaho, and never returned to Westport.

From the Fall 2020 issue of Pacific*, the Magazine of Pacific University.*

He Was Driven Away, But Wesley Stuck With Pacific

by Mike Francis

Newton Wesley [Pacific University] 1939, Honorary 1986 never was a student at Pacific University, nor was he a faculty member. Yet he was one of the most remarkable figures in the history of the university's College of Optometry. He had a transformational role in its establishment and was a leader in the contact lens field, all at a time when he also was persecuted as a Japanese-American amid and following World War II.

Wesley was born in Westport, Ore., in 1917, as Newton Uyesugi. As a youth, he was a top youth athlete, particularly in basketball. But he suffered from declining eyesight due to a progressive eye disease known as keratoconus, which results in distorted vision.

His family moved to Portland in 1925, and eleven years later, Uyesugi enrolled at the North Pacific College of Optometry. Following his graduation, he opened his practice in Portland in 1939, changing his last name to Wesley, he said, so his patients could find his name in the phone book.

Just a year later, he was offered an unexpected opportunity: His former teacher, Harry Lee Fording, offered to sell North Pacific College to Wesley for $5,000. Then only twenty-two, Wesley joined two classmates, Roy Clunes and Clarence Carkner, in purchasing the school in 1940. Wesley taught classes there in the mornings and ran his own practice in the afternoons.

The three young men operated the school until the summer of 1942, when they were forced to close. Just after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the U.S. government began interning people of Japanese descent in isolated camps, particularly along the West Coast.

Wesley, the first licensed Japanese-American optometrist in Oregon, was forced into the Portland Assembly Center in north Portland, on the site of the present-day Expo Center.

With help from advocates with the Japanese American Student Relocation Councils, which helped inmates in American internment camps relocate to colleges in the

IMAGE COURTESY OF ROY WESLEY

NEWTON WESLEY WITH DEMONSTRATION CONTACT LENSES. CA. 1970

Midwest and East Coast, Newton and his brother Edward were accepted into Earlham College in Richmond, Ind.

His parents remained in the Minidoka internment camp in Idaho."There was a time when I could not discuss evacuation—it made me choke up inside of me," Newton Wesley told an audience in Indiana in 1943, a year later. "Time has been a great healer and I can look at it more objectively."

Wesley attended Earlham for two years, then transferred to Loyola College in Chicago. Even at a distance, he remained involved in efforts to bring optometry to Pacific. His vision for the school was always to see it gain accreditation from the National Association of Accreditation of Colleges. He also advocated for awarding of a doctorate in optometry, something that was uncommon at the time.

In Oregon, partner Clarence Carkner continued to connect with Pacific, until the university took on the optometry program in Forest Grove. All graduates of North Pacific were granted alumni status by Pacific University.

The Wesley brothers never returned to practice optometry in the Northwest, but Newton Wesley's influence on the profession continued, driven by his own deteriorating vision.

"Newton had an idea to use contact lenses to treat his keratoconus just as one would use a truss to treat a hernia," explain historical papers collected at Earlham. "This treatment necessitated extended wear of lenses of the eye and was

IMAGE COURTESY OF ROY WESLEY

NEWTON WESLEY OBSERVES AS HIS WIFE, CECILIA UYESUGI, GIVES A YOUNG GIRL CORRECTIVE OPTICAL EXERCISES.

not possible with technology at the time."

Few shared his interest in the idea, but it would make him one of the foremost researchers and developers in contact lenses.

Wesley partnered with George Jessen, raising money and building a business called the Plastic Contact Lens Company, later Wesley-Jessen.

The company pioneered gas-permeable lenses that could correct distorted vision and be worn for extended periods. They developed and sold a variety of fitted contact lenses, including bifocals. They also developed a device called the

photoelectronic keratoscope, which optometrists used to measure the eye.

Wesley-Jessen was later acquired by CIBA Vision, an industry giant, while Wesley and Jessen went on to create the National Eye Research Foundation (NERF), which worked to create affiliates and partnerships to spread the fitting of contact lenses around the world.

In 1986, Pacific University bestowed upon Wesley an honorary doctor of science degree.

Wesley died in 2011 at age ninety-three. He was widely mourned by professional optometrists, who offered tributes such as the one written by Cary Herzberg, an optometrist who ran NERF for a time. He credited Wesley, among others, for pushing the practice of orthokeratology—using contact lenses to temporarily reshape the cornea of the eye—into the optometric mainstream. The government first opposed the practice, but eventually gave regulatory approval. That initiative, Herzberg wrote in 2011, "brought us into the exciting era we now reside in."

Herzberg, who had professional disagreements with Wesley, also honored the man's energy and kindness.

"My best memories of Newton however had to do with his graciousness," he wrote. "Whether you were invited to one of his many dinners he held or a guest visitor at his foundation he never let you leave without a personal word from himself and a robust handshake. Attending the NERF meetings in Las Vegas every October were lots of fun and learning because Newton would have it no other way."

Earlham College maintains the Uyesugi Japanese American Collection, documenting the experiences of Japanese-Americans who were forcibly interned during World War II. The collection is named for Newton Wesley's brother, Edward.

Wesley Book On The Way

Newton Wesley's biography, written by his son, Roy Wesley, will be published the later part of 2020 by Pacific University's Bee Tree Books imprint. "I never got to know my father in the way that I wanted," the younger Wesley, a research scientist and doctor of optometry, told the *Windy City Times* in 2017. "I decided to write his biography on his 100th birthday as a way of coming to grips with who my dad was as a person." Roy Wesley completed the manuscript in the spring of 2020, and Dean of University Libraries Isaac Gilman says he expects the book to be in print by the end of 2020.

Bend in the River

by Samuel A. Soter

As the Columbia River flows westward, nearing its junction with the Pacific Ocean, it encounters several large islands which force the river to form channels to by-pass these obstructions. Nearing the juncture with the eastern corner of Clatsop County, the river meets Puget Island, named for Lieutenant Peter Puget of the Royal English Navy who conducted a survey and exploration of the area in 1792. The island is now part of Wahkiakum County in the state of Washington.

The Puget Island land mass forces the main river channel to narrow and crowd the Clatsop County shore. The channel narrows to approximately 500 yards as it seeks to pass the large rocky presence of Clatsop Crest, rising some 650 feet above the river. As the river emerges from this narrow passage, it makes a significant bend northward to by-pass the large island named Tenasillahe. The name of this island is derived from two words in the Chinook jargon meaning "Little Land." Before the island was provided with dikes and drainage facilities in the 1930s, it was a marshy landmass, largely covered by the Columbia River high water flows.

In this small corner of Clatsop County lies a geographic area possessing a significant historical heritage that deserves more commentary than it receives in the general history of Clatsop County. In this five plus mile section of the river extending from Westport to Clifton, history was made that equals in significance to that made in the lower reaches of the river.

For a thousand years or more, the land adjacent to the rocky promontory known as Clatsop Crest was the ancestral home of the Kathlamet Indians. The name Kathlamet comes from the Chinook Indian language meaning "Rocky." The Kathlamets lived a good life in their ancestral home in Clatsop County. Nature provided boundless food resources. The forested slopes rising behind the land fronting the river extended back to Nicolai Mountain supporting large herds of deer and coastal elk. A small stream that tumbled down from the heights provided clean water. The Columbia River, especially the Clifton Channel, teemed with salmon. The Tenasillahe Island mass was a refuge for the thousands of ducks and geese that made their migratory passage north and south. The lofty presence of Clatsop Crest served as a natural barrier from the

winter weather flowing down from the east.

Unfortunately, a human tragedy of extraordinary consequences impacted the Kathlamet Indians, as well as most of the Indian population in the lower Columbia River area, in the period 1829-33. Disease epidemics quickly decimated the biologically vulnerable Indians, claiming close to ninety percent of the Indian population. An American physician, John Kirk Townsend, who visited the area in 1834, wrote, "The depopulation here has been truly fearful." This demographic disaster had a profound impact on the Indians of the lower Columbia River area. Indian morale and spiritual life was significantly affected. Social structures and traditions were altered. Tribal identities suffered after the demographic disaster.

The Kathlamets burned their Clatsop County homes, seeking to escape the contamination and sought new homes across the river at a place now known as Cathlamet, Washington. They joined with the remnants of the Wahkiakums and Cowlitz tribes to form a new Indian community which eventually grew to be the largest Indian settlement west of the Cascades.

The first white settler in Cathlamet was James Birnie, formerly of the Hudson Bay Company in Fort Vancouver. Birnie and his wife Charlotte, a half Kootenai and half French Canadian, established a trading post in Cathlamet. In 1851 the Birnie trading post also became one of the first post offices in the area. U. S. Army Captain Ulysses S. Grant (our 18th president) visited the Birnie trading post often as part of his military duties. Grant was stationed at Fort Vancouver.

In little over two years after the first settlers reached Oregon over the Oregon Trail, a true Yankee pioneer arrived at Oregon City with his covered wagons and possessions. It was 1843, when thirty-three year old Henry Hunt, from Ohio, arrived in Oregon determined to build a sawmill on the Columbia River and export lumber. He brought with him in his covered wagons his prized "mill irons," the essential metal elements required to build a water-powered sawmill: a headrig, iron crankshaft, and an assortment of iron bolts and a set of millwright's tools. Hunt inspected the existing water powered mills at Oregon City and Fort Vancouver and concluded that they were not well suited for exporting lumber. The long passage up the river for sailing vessels to obtain cargos was a negative factor. Hunt decided that a site for his mill must be closer to the river's mouth. Hunt sold his covered wagons and the oxen teams and purchased a flatboat. With a new partner, Benjamin Wood and a hired millwright named Edwin Otey, the trio loaded the flatboat with the mill irons, provi-

sions, blankets, cooking utensils and personal gear and commenced a slow float downstream on the Willamette and then the Columbia Rivers seeking the ideal spot for their sawmill.

After a long river passage on their flatboat, the Hunt party reached the area immediately west of the large promontory of Clatsop Crest. Although they did not know how far from the mouth of the river they were, they decided that they were close enough. The flatboat was unloaded and a year-long task of creating a residential facility and the sawmill plus associated facilities was started.

The small stream that tumbled down from the heights, which had attracted the Hunt party, provided an excellent spot at the bottom of a canyon that offered a sixty feet fall of the water. Here they built a twenty foot wooden water wheel to power the mill. When the mill construction was underway, word had reached up-river points about the Hunt enterprise and workers came down seeking employment. Hunt hired fifteen workers at the start of operations. The first export cargo of lumber consisted of 50,000 board feet of lumber shipped out on the brig *Chenamus* bound for California. The bark *Toulon* and the brig *Henry* were regularly calling at the Hunt Mill for lumber cargos.

After the Hunt Mill had operated for about one year, Astoria had grown as a settlement to thirty white people. A. E. Wilson, one of the earliest Astoria settlers, bought Benjamin Wood's partnership share in the Hunt operation. Wood decided that he wanted to go to California and seek his fortune in the gold diggings. Unfortunately, Wood was killed at Spanish Bar by claim jumpers. Wilson brought oxen teams to the Hunt Mill to help with the logging effort and five Kanakas from the Sandwich Islands to supplement the labor force. The Kanakas were paid $5 per month and supplied with salmon and potatoes.

As the Hunt Mill progressed, another partner entered the scene. James Birnie of the Trading Post in Cathlamet came aboard and enabled the Hunt enterprise to obtain better provisions than it had been getting from far away Oregon City and Portland.

In 1848, the brig *Henry* brought news of the California Gold strike and the Hunt operation began to hum. Henry Hunt bought the second small sawmill built in the lower Columbia River area by H. B. Polley, located at the mouth of the Clatskanie River and the third sawmill built near Tongue Point. Hunt prospered from his lumber enterprises at the height of the California Gold Rush period as lumber prices reached $100 per thousand board feet. Hunt's mills continued to prosper until the ad-

vent of steam powered mills, which were more cost efficient and more productive. Hunt's entrepreneurial spirit continued and with S. Coffin as a partner, they had a ship built in New York to provide regular service between the Columbia River ports and the San Francisco Bay area. Hunt traveled to San Francisco, California where he died in 1852.

In the 1930s the area suffered a significant change. The U.S. Corps of Engineers, who are responsible for maintaining the Columbia River navigation channel, undertook major dredging activity in the river to improve the channel depth. As a result, a significant amount of dredge spoils were pumped on the land just west of Clatsop crest and covered any traces remaining of the former Hunt Mill facilities. The only remaining evidence of the Hunt operations are the naked pilings at the water's edge which formerly supported the lumber export facilities.

Until 1866, the salmon industry on the Columbia River was confined to supplying fresh fish during the season and limited attempts to provide an export crop by smoking and pickling salmon. Jonathon Reed and John West were pioneers in this effort and both were operating on the river near Westport. It was the arrival of the Hume Brothers from the Sacramento River in California that marked the start of the true salmon fishery on the Columbia River. They are considered the fathers of the salmon packing industry on the Columbia River. Their influence extended to more than the processing of the salmon. Their considerable experience gained in the Maine fishery and their successful enterprise on the Sacramento River in California provided the valuable know-how that accelerated the effort on the Columbia River. The use of gill nets, the design of the fishing boats, the beginning of seining on the Columbia all were pioneered by the Hume Brothers.

There were four brothers and they were responsible for establishing approximately one half of all the salmon packing plants on the Columbia River. It was George and William Hume, with their employee, the tinsmith Andrew Hapgood, who established the first salmon packing plant at Eagle Cliff on the north shore of the river near Westport. Columbia Packing Co. was an early Hume operation located in Clifton. George Hume was responsible for bringing the first Chinese laborers up from California to work in his salmon processing facilities. In the 1880 census, there were a total of forty-one Chinese listed as living and working in the two salmon packing facilities operating in Clifton. The salmon fishery on the lower Columbia River was a very significant economic benefit for Clatsop County and its beginning was in the area near "The Bend of the River."

The village of Westport has a historical heritage that goes back to 1856, when John West, born in Scotland and a transplanted Canadian from Quebec, settled there and began milling lumber and salting salmon. Eventually he built a salmon packing facility on the north shore of the river near present day Megler.* He also built the first cannery in Oregon. (See the story about John West by his descendant Jim Aalberg in the Winter 2005 issue of *Cumtux*.) A fire destroyed the lumber operation at Westport in 1908. In 1910 the Westport site was purchased by Myron Woodard who built a unique lumber operation. The mill included a steam powered electric generator that not only supplied electric power for the mill site but was also carried some nine miles to the town of Clatskanie and served that site with electric power. It is of note that the Clifton-Bradwood area did not receive electricity from the public utility until 1958.

The Westport mill was unique in other ways. It could handle the largest logs available. It could mill timbers up to 125 feet in length. In the 1930s when the U.S. Navy was seeking new masts for the historic ship, the *U.S.S. Constitution*, the Westport mill was one of only two mills existing that could supply the required length of timbers. The Westport mill continued operations through the period of the financial crisis of the 1930s and furnished large timbers through World War II, finally closing in 1956. The Westport site can claim a historical heritage in Clatsop County that extended for one hundred years.

*According to Carlton E. Appelo in Brookfield—The Joe Megler Story (Wahkiakum County, Washington) published in 1966, John West built a cannery at Hungry Harbor in 1869. Glen Cunningham gives the date of 1876 to 1877 in the September 1953 issue of the *Oregon Historical Quarterly* "Oregon's First Salmon Canner, 'Captain' John West."

Less than three miles west of Westport was the village of Wauna. The name comes from the Indian word identifying a mythological Indian spirit that is associated with the Columbia River. Wauna has been the site of significant lumber operations since the early 1900s. A post office was established in Wauna in 1911. At present, it is the site of a significant paper and pulp mill.

In the early 1930s, the Clatsop Crest area received a new tenant. A new modern lumber mill was established, The Bradley-Woodard Lumber Co., later becoming the Columbia-Hudson Lumber Co. The site became known as Bradwood. The mill employed approximately 150 people. With a payroll of $75,000 per month, it was the second-largest in Clatsop County. The annual production of the mill was valued at $30,000,000. Bradwood had a post office, an elementary

Image courtesy of the Editor

Sam Soter and John Westerholm
at the Heritage Museum talking about the fishing industry.

school, a general store and thirty-six homes. The mill ceased operations in 1963.

The history of Clatsop County has had a significant contribution from the people and events that took place in the area around the rocky promontory called Clatsop Crest. The Clifton-Bradwood area, although a prominent part of this historical heritage, was long an isolated part of Clatsop County. It was not until 1937 that the county built a narrow gravel road connecting the area with Highway 30. The highway that connects Astoria with Portland was a late creation. It was not until 1913 that the final section of highway connecting Astoria and Westport was started to complete the Highway 30 route from Astoria to Portland. The Clatsop Crest area had to rely on water transportation for over fifty years to connect with the rest of the county. It was not until 1898 when the railroad was built through the area that a second transport medium was made available.

Despite the long period of isolation, the area did contribute significant chapters in the historical heritage of Clatsop County. Recently, the Clatsop Crest area came to attention again when a proposal to build a large natural gas import facility was proposed for the area. Henry Hunt's decision in 1843, that the Clatsop Crest area was essential for his export operation, is now termed essential for an import operation. This historically significant area continues to provide Clatsop County with economic support but no longer as an isolated corner of the county.

Samuel Soter is also the author of "Clifton, Oregon, Part 1 and 2" in the Winter 2004 issue of Cumtux. *(Vol. 24, No. 1).*

Notes:

Corning, Howard MacKinley. 1989. *Dictionary of Oregon History*, Portland, OR: Binford & Mort Publishing, describes James Birnie as having been stationed at Fort George in 1820-21. From 1822 to 1839, he was moved around to different posts but returned to Fort George about 1839 where he stayed until he retired in 1846 to Cathlamet. According to this source he had eleven children.

Hunt, Henry H., Clatsop Co. 640 a[cres] S[outh] shore of Columbia River, opposite Puget Island and one of the Katlamet [sic] Islands. Personal occupancy. 1 June 1846. Void by claimant altering the lines and recording at pg. 348 in Record Bk 4, 26 June 1847. Bk 2 p 42 [Provisional Land Claims]

Hunt, H.H., Clatsop Co, 610 a. On Columbia River; being same claim recorded by H.H. Hunt, 1 June 1844. Personal occupancy, 26 June 1847. V 4 p 348

Marcellus, A.A., Clatsop Co., 640a. On Columbia River; H.H. Hunt on E. Intends personal occupancy, 5 May 1847. V 4 p 284

Riley, John, Clatsop Co, 640a. On bank of Columbia River; adjs [adjacent to] John Riley. Occupancy 28 June 1848. V8 p53.

The above entries are from the Gurley, Lottie L. 1982. *Genealogical material in Oregon: provisional land claims, abstracted, volumes I-VIII, 1845-1849*. Portland, OR (1410 S.W. Morrison St., Portland 97205): Genealogical Forum of Portland.

No. 4283 Hunt, Henry H. 5 Jan 1855 Aaron E. Wait, Attorney for Ursula J. Swain, wife of Alva H. Swain & widow of Henry H. Hunt, gave the following information in an aff[idavit]: Henry H. Hunt is dec[ceased]. He arr[ived] Ore Fall 1844; b 1811, Oh; SC [Settled Claim] 31 Dec 1844 to 14 June 1851 except one temp[orary] abs[ence] to the Atlantic Slope of the U.S. & a few times abs on business. He m[arried] Ursula 14 Feb 1850, Wayne Co., Indiana. Hunt died in San Francisco, Cal. about 25 Dec 1852 & widow m Alva H. Swain 1 Feb 1854, Wayne Co, Ind. 31 Oct 1854 Ursula J. Swain, administratrix of the estate of Henry H. Hunt, of Richmond, Wayne Co, Ind., gave Power of Attorney to A.E. Wait of Oregon City for settling the estate. 3 May 1854 Nicholas Smith gave aff that he was acquainted with H.H. Hunt, late of Clatsop Co, Ore T. [Territory], & believes he was b 1811, Oh, removed by parents before 1818 to Wayne Co, Ind. Until 1844 when he emigrated to Ore T. Smith was present at marriage 14 Feb 1850 & Knows that Ursula Hunt m 9 Feb 1854 Alva H. Swain. 19 May 1854 Jacob M. Wair, Clackamas Co, Ore T. [Territory] gave aff that he immigrated to Ore Territory in company with Hunt in Fall of 1843 and fore part of 1844. Same date S.W. Moss gave aff that in 1844 Hunt built mill later known as Hunt's Mill. Jacob B. Julian states he wrote to Supt. of Marine Hospital, San Francisco for information regarding death of Hunt—reply from Supt. Stated, "on 7 Dec 1852 Henry H. Hunt, aged about 41, native of Oh came to hosp. & d on 25th of same mo. Julian stated Hunt was abs from wife some 25 mos. before his d but wrote frequently. Egbert Olcott gave aff that he purchased lumber from Hunt's Mill. Aff: James R. Robb, John Hobson. T8N R6W, secs 4,5,8,9.

Alva H. Swain,31, born in Indiana and his wife Ursula Hunt Swain, 27, born in Ohio, appear on the 1860 census in Pleasant Township, LaPorte County, Indiana with their two children Ellen, 5, and Charles, 4. By this time Alva Swain was a well-to-do farmer. From Gurley, Lottie L. 1982. *Genealogical material in Oregon: provisional land claims, abstracted, volumes I-VIII, 1845-1849*. Portland, OR (1410 S.W. Morrison St., Portland 97205): Genealogical Forum of Portland.

Fort Stevens Firebug

by Melvin L. Bashore

On Monday night, July 14, 1902, people in Astoria noticed what appeared to be a great blazing fire near the mouth of the Columbia River. A few climbed the West Astoria hill to get a better view, but it was too far away to determine where the fire was. They watched it burn for more than two hours. The next day they learned the fire had been at Fort Stevens.

An old mess hall, then being used to store odds and ends, had burned to the ground. The cause of the fire was unknown. But five days later, it became apparent that this mess hall fire was the result of arson. On Saturday, an attempt was made to set fire to the torpedo storehouse, and one of the company barracks buildings. Fortunately, both fires were discovered and extinguished before any negligible damage could occur. But it could have been worse as the fire hoses nearby had been cut to ribbons. The torpedo storehouse was built of fireproof materials, and the fire at that place didn't get a foothold. The barracks fire, if not quickly discovered, would have been an entirely different story.

A disturbing note was found after the fires were extinguished. It stated that twelve men had banded together to destroy the post. The message was signed "The Twelve Dynamiters." Twenty-eight additional guards were posted on duty, and detectives were engaged to try to ferret out the incendiaries. Although officers of the post were reticent to comment, it was widely believed that the fire was had been the work of some enlisted recruits.

A retired army officer living in Astoria thought it entirely possible that the fires could have been set by soldiers dissatisfied with army life's disciplined regimen. During his career, he had heard such gripes many times. There seemed to be something to his speculation when newspapers reported that some enlisted men had voiced complaints about being overtaxed with unnecessary work. Some also stated that they were being mistreated severely by some of the officers. It was a serious enough matter that the War Department was notified, and an official investigation into the issue was started.

For three months, no other fire incidents occurred. That changed on Thursday, October 16, when three separate fires were started. The first fire was discovered shortly after midnight in an old building used as an engineer's storehouse. The building was damaged, but the

contents were saved. A second fire in newly-constructed lavatories was discovered at 9:30 AM and was successfully extinguished. A third fire was set two hours later in some old buildings being used as pumping stations. The buildings were fully engulfed by the time it was discovered and were a total loss.

Two weeks after these fires, on Thursday, October 30, a large bundle of cotton waste saturated with coal oil was discovered in the old canteen building that was then being used as a tailor shop. Fortunately, it was found before any foul play could be done.

About two weeks later, five soldiers were arrested, but two of the five were released in mid-November. Reporters tried to find out information about how those five soldiers came to be arrested, but useful information was not forthcoming. One report stated that they were arrested on suspicion of their handwriting was similar to that written in the "Twelve Dynamiters" note. Shortly after the threatening message was found in July, the commanding officer directed every enlisted man to write a short sentence and sign his name to it. Nominally, it was done as a way of selecting who should attend the post's school. Every military station provided a school for illiterate soldiers. But in fact, all of the writing samples were used to compare with that of the note.

Another story asserted that a Portland police detective "enlisted" to work undercover at the fort. He became friendly with some of the malcontents, including ingratiating himself with one soldier who confided that he intended to go AWOL. The undercover detective played along and said he would join him in leaving the army. Thus, thinking they were kindred spirits, the soldier stated that he was the arsonists' ringleader and named his confederates. The undercover detective and the confessed arsonist got as far as Portland on the train, where the soldier was arrested and brought back to Fort Stevens. The confederates that he fingered were also arrested. A story leaked out from the post that one of those arrested was a private whose last name was Thompson, but that couldn't be confirmed.

It wasn't until Wednesday, November 26, that the public learned the facts of the arsonist's capture. That information was only made public then because the confessed arsonist escaped from the basement cell where he had been locked up in the post's guardhouse. His escape was so utterly successful that post officers must have realized that to catch him, they would need the public's help.

The true story of the initial capture of the alleged arsonist involved a government Secret Serviceman. He visited the post undercover as

a new enlisted man. After only a few days, his suspicions centered on Private Ernest E. Thompson as the guilty party. On payday, the undercover Secret Serviceman followed Thompson into Astoria and joined him in having fun in town. Thompson told the undercover man that he was thinking about deserting. The Secret Serviceman said that he would join him, so both men left Astoria on the train to Portland. At Portland, Thompson confided to the undercover man that he was the ringleader of the incendiaries, naming two other soldiers as his accomplices. The undercover man handcuffed Thompson and telegraphed the fort to have the other two soldiers arrested.

In the guardhouse, he confessed, both verbally and in writing, that he alone was responsible for all the fires. He talked about wanting to commit suicide. They had the confessed arsonist locked up for just a few days before he made his escape. The last time that anyone saw him was Monday, November 24. The prison guard brought his dinner to him at 5:30 PM. "During the night, he disappeared as though the earth had opened and swallowed him," reported the *San Francisco Call*. Search parties looked everywhere for him without success. On Wednesday afternoon, he was reportedly seen near Svensen. He must have climbed aboard the undercarriage of the train baggage car near there. He got as far as Mayger before railroad men found him and tied him up.

After he was caught and returned to the Fort Stevens guardhouse, Thompson recounted how he had escaped. "I got away from Fort Stevens by unscrewing the bolt on the door of my cell, and nobody helped me." He had feigned illness, asking for Vaseline, that he used to grease the bolts on his cell door. He also recanted his earlier confessions, hoping that he might thereby gain his freedom. "I want to say that I did not burn any of the fort buildings or have any hand to the work. However, I admit that I wrote letters at the other boys' suggestion, in which threats were made that the buildings were to be burned." His attempts to change his story were not believed.

Thompson was indicted on eleven counts, seven for starting fires, three for sending threatening letters, and one for desertion. Thompson's past was uncovered and brought up during his court-martial trial and before his sentencing. Before enlisting, he had served almost three years for burglary in the Iowa State Industrial School for Boys in Eldora, Iowa. He was sentenced to that reformatory when he was sixteen years old and released from there on July 30, 1900. He was enumerated in the 1900 U.S. Census while serving time in that place; his birth was listed as May 1881. His father was

Image courtesy of the author.

Private Ernest E. Thompson's "mug shot".

Milton G. Thompson, then living in Clinton, Iowa. On March 13, 1902, he enlisted in the Army in Clinton, Iowa, and posted to the Coast Artillery at Fort Stevens.

During his court-martial trial at Fort Stevens, one of Thompson's brothers spoke on his behalf. "He was born while his mother was a raving maniac confined in an insane asylum, where she died," the *Morning Oregonian* reported his brother said. This claim was patently false as his birth mother, Emeline Thompson, lived until 1927. This brother also told the court that his family always considered his brother to be insane but never capable of violence or of doing harm. The court considered the brother's testimony and looked further into his mental condition before sending their findings and recommendations to the War Department.

Taking a cue from his brother's testimony, Private Thompson started acting like he was crazy. "The officers believe that Thompson's insanity is largely feigned," reported the *Morning Astorian*, in an effort to escape punishment." On December 6, 1902, he was sentenced to twenty years in the United States Penitentiary in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. He was taken under heavy guard by two sergeants and two privates to prison with his legs and arms shackled.

Letters, reports, notes, and mugshots in his case file while in custody at Leavenworth Prison are preserved in the National Archives at Kansas City. They detail his habits and minor offenses committed while imprisoned, mostly talking, laughing, and dodging work assignments.

In April 1903, he wrote a letter to the War Department asking for

clemency in his sentence. In that letter, he asked for sympathy and understanding, asserting that he was wrongly convicted on some counts. "I do not think I am a very bad man," he wrote. "My service in the United States Army was very good up to Nov. the 26th." That would have been the day that he was recaptured after escaping from the post guardhouse. He protested his innocence of setting the fires. "I am not guilty of the charges of the fires that was at the Post," he wrote. "I tried to tell what I knew, but it was no use. I could not make them believe anything at all, so I stood for it all." He wished he could see his aged parents before they died. "I have my dear old Mother and Father yet, but it will only be a short time until they will be laid away to rest." His father died in 1921 and his mother in 1927, both buried in Clinton, Iowa. In his prison admittance papers, it was recorded that his religion was Methodist. "I never miss to go to church on Sunday or any time I can go." He swore that he had no intention to get even with anyone. "I have no intention of getting any revenge if I have to stay my whole time." Needless to say, his request for clemency was denied.

In mid-October 1904, Private Thompson was admitted to the penitentiary hospital suffering from what the doctors called intestinal tuberculosis. Three weeks after his admission, surgeons operated, removing over two quarts of pus from his abdomen. His father learned of his poor health and wrote to the warden for an update. The warden told him that since the operation, he had been a patient in the Tubercular Hospital in prison. For several months, he had been discharging pus, and doctors expressed concern that he was "in constant danger of general tubercular infection."

The warden felt sorry for the young prisoner, writing to his father: "He is a young man yet, and if you could induce him to settle down and obey the laws and take care of himself, he might live a good long time and be useful."

On September 4, 1905, Ernest Thompson was released from Leavenworth into the custody of his father. He had only served three years of his sentence, but his health conditions were the deciding factor in his early release. I could not find anything further about him after his release to his father's care in my research.

Melvin L. Bashore lives in Hammond, Oregon. He worked for thirty-eight years as a librarian, historian, and curator of historic sites for the LDS Church before retiring in 2013.

CCHS IMAGE #79.025.026

Fort Stevens, 1906. From a panorama by Frank Woodfield.